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CORRECTION

Issue 437 Commentary author Dave Hancox was cited as writing from his position as Executive Director of MCIL. Lavender apologizes and clarifies that Mr. Hancox's opinions are his own and do not represent those of his employer.

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Jin Xing. Photo by Andy Lien



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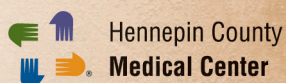
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FROM THE EDITOR | Andy Lien

Jin Xing pauses in telling her personal story, admitting that for a time she questioned why there was such a fascination with her as a transgendered person, as opposed to an accomplished dancer. She answers that question saying that she realized her personal story and artistic one were intertwined and if her story “can contribute to art, then fine.” —Lannie Walker, page 28

Intertwining life and art. Not a new concept, but one that is particularly sensitive when one’s life has been as dynamic as that of Jin Xing. Reading about her life in Lannie Walker’s article, I learned much more about Jin than I knew when I photographed her for the cover.

This cover shot and the photos here are the results of a great turn of fortune for me as a photographer and journalist. I was invited to sit in on the dressing room session as Jin Xing had her hair and make-up done for the reception and performance by her troupe, Jin Xing Dance Theatre Shanghai, at the Orpheum Theatre.

If you’ve ever watched someone applying make-up or having make-up applied, you may be able to envision the intimacy of the situation. The dressing room at the Orpheum was central and small—surrounded by her dancers in various states of dressing themselves and eating their suppers. Jin was seated in front of the lit mirror and her make-up artist had trays and bottles of make-up that the other dancers would request and receive like children seeking their allowances. Their movements were slight and their bodies took up little space in the small area, my ample Nordic frame squeezed into the corner to give them—and my lens—breathing room. I spoke only when spoken to and was allowed to simply observe and document. This was Jin’s time to prepare, to watch her own artist make her face into a dramatic accessory to the dances she choreographed—both off stage, and on.

Short, soft words were exchanged between Jin and her make-up artist. Not knowing the language, I didn’t know what they

meant—but they were not alarming, not tense. They made for a staccato rhythm to the session, but only in their infrequency... not their actual timbre. The artist and her palette are well-acquainted, her brushes touched exactly the places that required coloration. The stroke of black across the eyelid, the plume of rouge up the cheekbone, the strategic stripes of definition down the sides of the nose; I was privy to all of it.

And, as I watched, I thought of this woman’s journey. Not knowing she’d undergone numerous surgeries to reach her current state of being, I simply pondered in awe how she came to be—as I want to know how anyone has become what they are today. Jin, having started male but being unmistakably female, held herself with the grace of what one can consider to be feminine and I can’t imagine she would have ever presented herself in any other manner. She spoke few words to me but *tsked* me off the edge of the counter-top I was leaning against to wipe any vestiges of foundation from it so I wouldn’t end up with a line of make-up across my pants. Though I didn’t really know her, I felt relief that she had become what she is today—not only the accomplished artist, but the seemingly peaceful woman.

When I read Jin’s statement to Lannie questioning the public’s fascination with her sexual identity and how it overshadows her accomplishment as a dancer, the answer is so simple: Jin is an accomplishment. Where she drew short in her conclusion was when she stated that if her story “can contribute to art, then fine.”

She doesn’t merely contribute—she is art. She has danced her whole life between worlds. She danced that evening in the dressing room even as she sat still, hands clasped in her lap.

We can all draw inspiration from the fact that she now choreographs her own dances and those of the people around her—despite adversity.

May we all aspire to do the same.

With thanks,

Andy □



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“Heterosexuality is not normal, it’s just common.”

D. Parker

I’VE LEARNED a new word: *doxa*. According to author Hanne Blank in her most informative new, *Straight: The Surprisingly Short History of Heterosexuality*, “When anthropologists talk about this ‘stuff everyone knows,’ they use the term *doxa*.” She goes on to explain that the word comes from the Greek for “common knowledge,” and is basically what “goes without saying.”

More specifically, *doxa* is what goes without saying in a particular culture at a particular time—like today’s *legalizing gay marriage will destroy the family; children must have one mother and one father; or, all the* (insert the persecuted group of the designated period) *are ignorant, lazy, dirty, oversexed*, etc. Here in our own country those slots have been filled at one time or another by Jews, Irish, Blacks, Chinese, Poles, Greeks, to name a few.

As Blank points out, we didn’t even have heterosexuals (or, for that matter homosexuals) until May 6, 1868, when Austro-Hungarian Karl Maria Kertbeny used those classifications in a letter to Karl Ulrichs (read *Straight* to learn more about Paragraph 143 of the Prussian Penal Code under discussion). A Minnesotan homesteader in

1858 would not have described himself as “heterosexual,” and while British gays in the early 1800s might have called themselves “mollies,” they wouldn’t have used “homosexuals.”

When heterosexual did come into common usage, as late as 1923 it meant an “abnormal or perverted appetite towards the opposite sex;” not until Merriam-Webster’s 1934 edition had it morphed to “normal sexuality.” Not exactly always and forever.

While all this makes for interesting reading, the light that flashed on upon learning about *doxa* was that this is exactly what bigots use—or try to use—to create believers. *Marriage has always been between one man and one woman*. No, it hasn’t, not even in the Bible. *Legal same-sex unions will ruin heterosexual marriage*. Oh? I have never seen one sensible reason to support that statement. After warning that gays will next want to marry their cocker spaniels, their argument is pretty much spent.

The extremists first work to create *doxa* through repetition, then use it to manipulate public opinion. The best defense and offense in this war of words? Ask, “How?” “Show me,” “What actual proof have you?” Listen carefully to their answers. □



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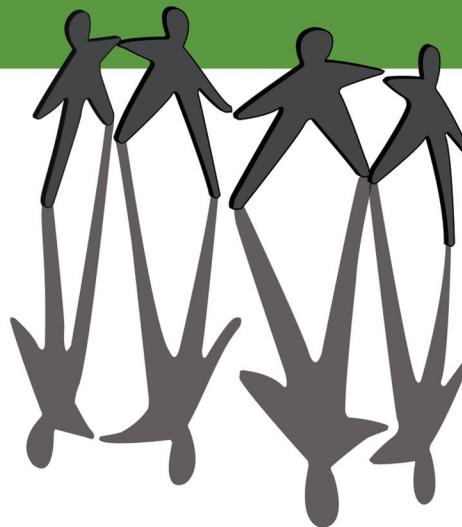


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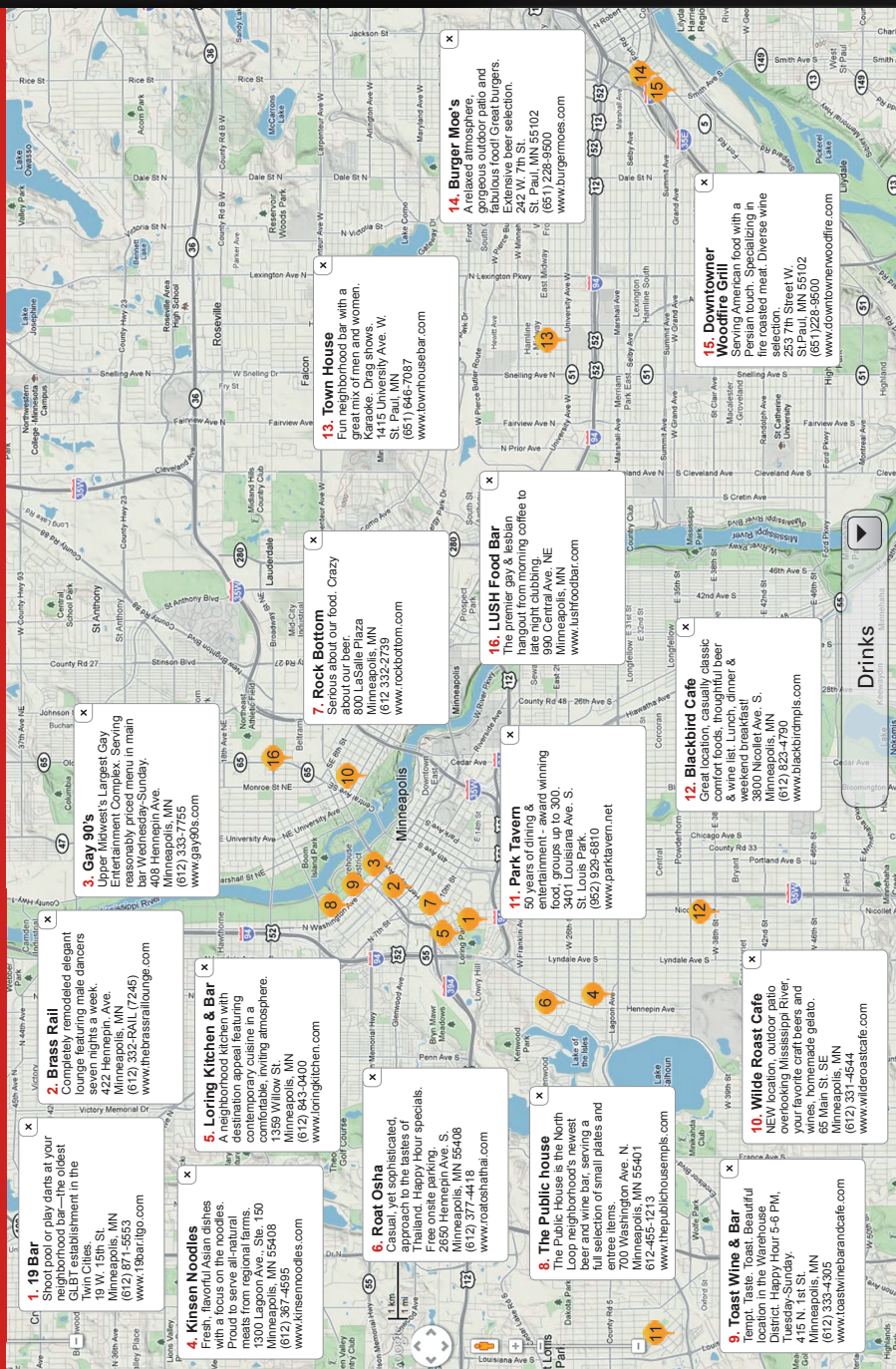
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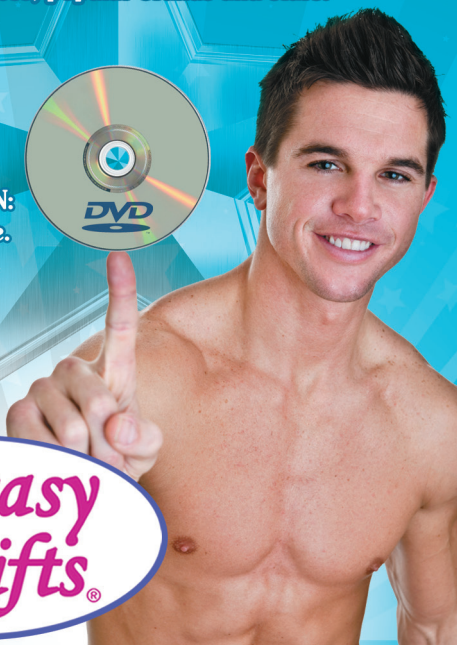
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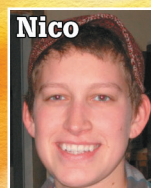
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Chef Jack Riebel puts a lot of love in their soon-to-be-famous footlong dogs. Photos by Mike Hnida

Butcher & the Boar

copper-colored wall that faces the street glitters. The penny floor, made from over 12,000 pennies, catches the early afternoon sunlight that glints off the line of new taps. At second glance, everything is just a little rough, the slow burn of a pork fat-infused shot of Wild Turkey leaves the drinker exhaling soft breaths of smoke and

Butcher & the Boar at first glance is elegant. Nice. Easy. The

bourbon. The artfully charred-wood rustic walls mix with the reclaimed metalworks fashioned into light fixtures. The play of heat, char, age, and smoke infuses every bite of food we try.

Owner and Chef Jack Riebel has been doing fine dining for over 25 years. Most recently at the Dakota, he left to open this, the first restaurant he's ever owned. He's ready to take the dining down low to easy eating. He's making what he referred to as, "Real food. Simple. Big smoke – big flavor. I kept going to all of these beer diners and the more fancy the chefs tried the make ➔

Continued on page 22

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SLICE



Already looking a bit like an old-school butcher shop, the kitchen is ramping up for the impending opening.

the food, the less it matched the beer.”

The bar program will prominently feature beer and bourbon, a drink the chef earned an affection for from his grandma, a Wild Turkey devotee.

On the day we visited the final preparations were still going into the restaurant. The walls were being blotted with stain, the bar awaiting its actual top, but the kitchen was humming and the walk-ins fast filling with food. At press time, the projected opening date is still held at March 8th. (Check our Facebook Page for more up to date information – and likely a picture of me drinking at the bar the second they start serving.)

The unfussy food is full of nostalgic flavors with a refined, perfect Peter Botcher twist. Botcher is Jack's right hand man.

Riebel jokes that Peter's the butcher and he's the bore (hardly). Botcher is an expert sausage-maker. Raised outside of Winona, he wears his German heritage with great pride. Churning out velvet-textured turkey liver Braunschweiger; smoked pork jowl that's used in place of bacon; garlicky rich venison summer sausage, fat-studded beef sausage spiked with cumin, paprika and garlic, with a faint, herby note from something he won't tell me about. All the meat is sourced from farmers who believe that the quality of the meat is directly linked to the care of the animal. All the beef is grassfed, which has a bad rap for flavor. People say that it's too lean, but the gorgeous fat, glistening off a smoked beef shortrib that we sampled was impressive with the luxurious mouth feel – not to mention flavor.



Grassfed beef shortribs. Making the cheddar jalapeno brats.

Not that it's entirely a meat-fest. The menu will include walleye, a seafood-based booya, and I overheard him mention something about pinto bean "meat" acting as chorizo.

The bar will serve 65 varieties of bourbons along with some infusions and the sort of craft cocktail list that refined diners have come to expect. The patio is tucked in off the street, with a reclaimed tree trunk being used as high top tables. When it opens, it will likely be one of the best outdoor quaff spots in the city. Half will be a beer garden, and half will be set up for dining. In the warmer months, the restaurant will seat up to 350 people which they're going to need for Pride. Riebel is acutely aware of the surrounding area's gay community and roots. Steps from Loring Park, he hopes his restaurant will help revitalize a part of downtown that has been a bit sketchy in recent years.

While the weather is still too cold for the out-of-doors, there are still plenty of spots to tuck away. Inside, the space keeps going and going, with tons of nooks and crannies. The downstairs will hold a small speakeasy space and another room that will eventually be available for private parties. They also plan to put in a kitchen table, where large parties can gather and observe as Chef whirls around his kitchen. (The man seems to only operate on fast and light-speed settings.) Parking will be easy with valet, a small lot, and a nearby ramp. They'll open at 5pm nightly.

The one menu item that sums up what they plan to do at Butcher & the Boar is the footlong hotdog. It's downright lurid in size, hanging out over either end of the bun. ➔

Continued on page 24



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SLICE

Continued from page 23



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The buns are almost pretzel-colored, toasty brown and made especially for the restaurant by nationally-renowned pastry Chef Michelle Gayer's Salty Tart Bakery. They split them on the side and toast them in butter-lobster roll style--before sliding in the grill roasted wiener. The dogs are the only sausage not made in house. Because of the necessary volume, they had to out-source, but they are smoked and finished in-house and come from Botcher's recipe. (Germans apparently take their hot dogs very seriously.) The exterior casing snaps with each bite. The dogs are dressed under a Cajun chow-chow, tangy with a bit of pickle-brineyness followed by a subtle sweetness. Drizzled with bright yellow mustard and a bit of creamy mayo, they're dotted with intimidating-looking red chilies. While each bite has a unobtrusive burn, it's just the right amount to balance the black pepper flavor in the dog and the sweet, sour twang of the chow-chow.

Close your eyes and it's not hard to imagine a bustling patio scene, surrounded by friends, with your sandal-clad feet up on a chair and a cold pint of beer sweating on the table top, hiding out after a too-long work day. □

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Jin Xing: “We Share One Space, We Breathe Together”

FOUNDER AND choreographer of China's first independent modern dance company, Jin Xing, rivets audiences with her moves on stage, yet does not dance around the topic of her gender. Born in 1967 as a male, she says she knew from the age of six she was truly female. Early on, Xing says she also believed she was destined to become a performer and dreamed of being on stage. At nine, it was the Chinese military that gave her an outlet to pursue that dream. Xing says officials came to her house and told her she was selected to train as a dancer under military regime. At first, she says her grandfather and mother objected saying, “Boys don’t go dance.” But young Xing was determined, going on a hunger strike for two days until her parents finally relented. She describes the Russian ballet style she was taught first in the army as “harsh.” Instruction in the softer styles of French Ballet followed and then she trained in Classical Chinese dance which she says at the time was used mostly for political propaganda.

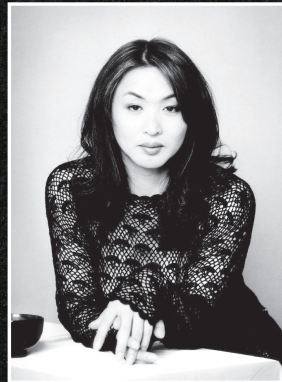
By the age of seventeen, Xing says she had no idea about contemporary dance. That changed when she was selected among China's top twenty dancers to receive a scholarship sponsored by the Rockefeller Foundation to study dance in New York City. “Bingo” she says, smiling as she remembers the moment. She reflects, “In my life I don’t belong to any one party, I respect all the religions, but I do believe in fate.” The turning point proved fateful both professionally and personally. After finally gaining approval from the military to move to New York, Xing says upon her arrival in America she thought, “Now I can finally be myself, not just as a dancer but as a person.” Still, fear lingered. During her first month in New York she woke up every night terrified that the military would come and snatch her back to China. At nineteen, as she explored new forms of dance she also explored her sexuality saying she tried gay relationships but it just “didn’t work.”

When asked how it was that she became aware of sexual reassignment surgery as an option, Xing answers in her deeply descriptive manner of speaking, saying it was through friends she learned of the possibility and thought, “maybe, just maybe there is a small island out there just for me.” Getting to that island would prove another long journey, per- ➔

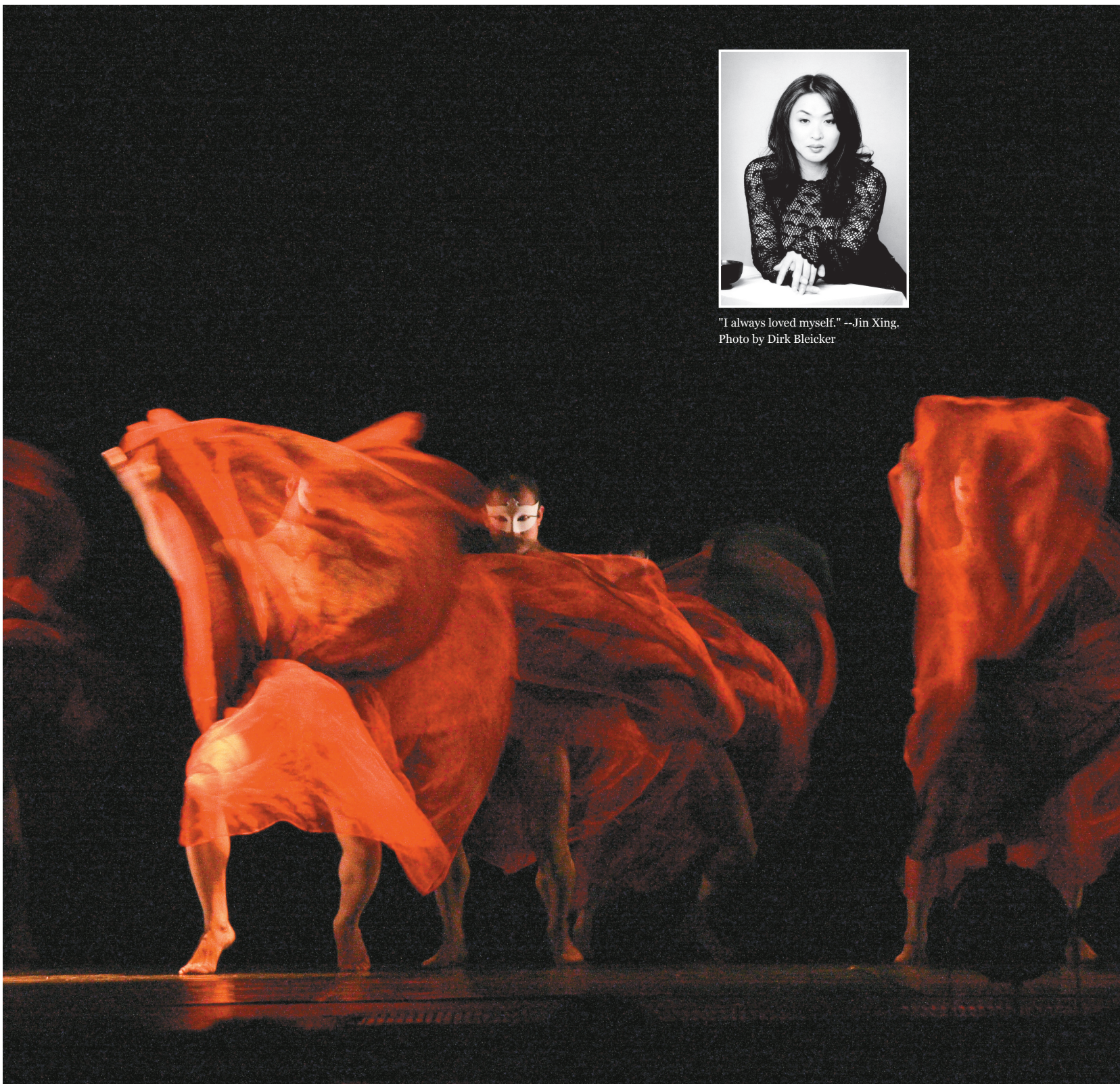
Continued on page 26



Shanghai Tango, Red Wine. Photo by Paula Kajzar & Antonio Pellicano



"I always loved myself." --Jin Xing.
Photo by Dirk Bleicker



haps an even more difficult trip than the one from China to New York. After one botched surgery in a series of 16, Xing was left with nerve damage along her left leg and the fear that she might never dance again. But Xing's spirit remained strong and three months later she was up and dancing. Her positive outlook cuts through even the most difficult parts of her story. "I never hated myself," she says. "I always loved myself." Following her 1996 surgeries she says she dated a Chinese man for awhile, but it didn't work out. Now married to a German man, Xing speaks of her three children—ages nine, ten and twelve—and a new passion lights her eyes.

Adoption was not a seamless endeavor. Her children, she says, were teased because of her transgender identity. Xing says she was told she could not be a good mother because of the fact that she was once physically a man. "Only my children," she says with conviction, "can tell me if I am a good mother." In this role as a mother, she finds the strength to continue giving of herself as an artist. "When I go home and see my three beautiful children, they recharge me," she says.

Jin Xing pauses in telling her personal sto-

ry, admitting that for a time she questioned why there was such a fascination with her as a transgendered person, as opposed to an accomplished dancer. She answers that question saying that she realized her personal story and artistic one were intertwined and if her story "can contribute to art, then fine."

In 1999, she created what is now the "Jin Xing Dance Theatre Shanghai." Since then she and her troupe of 15 dancers have performed all over the globe including in London, Italy, Austria, Australia and Switzerland. During a trip to China two years ago Ben Johnson, Director of Northrop Concerts and Lectures at the University of Minnesota, was filled with a passion of his own: to bring "Jin Xing Dance Theatre Shanghai" to Minneapolis. Says Johnson, "Blending contemporary dance theater with a strong sense of Chinese identity, Jin Xing is recognized as one of China's most important cultural treasures. She is also internationally recognized as a major voice for freedom of expression, social justice, and human rights in China and throughout the world. Her story is extraordinary and we are incredibly pleased to debut her in Minnesota and feature her work."

As I sit backstage watching Xing and her

dancers hold hands in a circle moments before the curtain rises for a performance at the Orpheum Theater here in Minneapolis, I see Xing as the family woman that she is, with a dream not at all different than most—to share her passion with others. This passion comes across in "Shanghai Tango," a collection of Xing's work including "Half Dream" where male and female dancers, who at first appear conjoined then separate and Xing emerges as the feminine focal point; a piece which won Xing the best choreographer award at the American Dance Festival in 1991. In another dance entitled "Black and Red," crimson flags and fans are props for dancers as they move to rhythmic, at times oppressive, drum beats. The dance won the 1998 China Cultural Ministry Award for Modern Dance despite attempts at censorship by the Chinese Government under assumption the piece is a commentary on communism and the Chinese revolution, a claim Xing refutes. "Island" is yet another highly provocative piece within the compilation, featuring two male dancers appearing to be nude, sensually supporting and pushing off one another in graceful motions set to the ethereal sounds of French musician René Aubry's "Les Voyageurs." ➔

Continued on page 41

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Left to Right:
Houston Ballet's Sara Webb and Connor Walsh. Photo © Amitava Sarkar.
Ballet Preljocaj. Photo © JC Carbonne.
Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's Kirven James Boyd.
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Imagine three youths living in an isolated area with virtually no adult supervision. Director Randy Reyes says that A. Rey Pamatmat's play involves "a Filipino and a white teen discovering their gay identity together. This brings up the cultural factors of coming out. How is it different for a white teen to come out than a Filipino teen? There are also economic factors that further complicate the situation."

Alex Galick plays Kenny, a 16-year old Filipino American in the early 1990s, who shares a remote farmhouse with his 12-year old sister, Edith (Isabella Dawis). Galick relates "because their mother is dead and their father absent, he's been forced to become both parent and sibling to his little sister. He takes care of the house, feeds them both, and budgets on a meager weekly allowance that their father may or may not remember to send. This house has become an isolated prison filled with the pain of abandonment and loneliness. To deal with that pain, Kenny has chosen to hide from the outside world and give in to his father's neglect. Then he falls in love for the first time with a friend from school, Benji (Matthew Cerar). Together they discuss and explore their sexuality, and search for vindication of who they are despite an environment that tells them they're freaks."

Galick continues, "they build a relationship and support one another. It's not easy for Kenny to open up in this relationship. His fear of abandonment and injury is something he has to deal with. When the outside world comes crashing in, he can no longer hide, and it threatens to destroy the family he's built with Edith and Benji. Kenny must confront his fears and also his father."

Cerar says that Benji "must come to terms with the strong feelings he is having for Kenny. As he yearns to form his idea of a traditional young relationship, he faces resistance from Kenny, who is less comfortable with this idea. Just like many other teenagers, all Benji strives to do is openly express his eagerness and passion for a world that doesn't accept it."

Their bond is further strengthened by 12-year old Edith. Dawis sees her "as stubbornly self-sufficient. In her eyes she's a heroine, fighting to keep her brother and herself safe. She's fiercely independent and uncannily sharp. But she also has a very big heart, and a kind of maternal instinct to protect those around her. The moment their thin sense of security is threatened, Edith springs into action."



Outside the Circle. Photo by Barb Campbell

Outside the Circle
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Discrimination against lesbians and persons with disabilities comes to the forefront in this new play featured at Pangea World Theater and Teatro del Pueblo's annual Political Theatre Festival. The playwrights are also the central actors. Andrea Assaf plays Andy, a lesbian madly in love with her straight female friend, (Maria Vale, who also plays multiple roles). Samuel Valdez plays Rafa, a straight barfly with cerebral palsy.

Dora Arreola has been directing *Outside the Circle* as the writer/actors develop it. She observes that the characters "push each other to confront their phobias and begin to accept each other when it becomes clear that both are outcasts of society. Rafa confronts that he has internalized homophobia because of family taboos around homosexuality and taboos about disability. At first, he denies that he is feminized because his body is not 'normal', because the social concept of women is 'weak' or 'not masculine' - he has internalized homophobia because of his condition. On the other hand Andy is struggling with her impatience and disgust with spending time in a dangerous homophobic environment—a heterosexual men's bar with Rafa—who wants to show off his machismo and power as a heterosexual man."

Assaf says that arguments she and



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Valdez have had in the process of shaping the play have actually been incorporated into some scenes. She points out that “nearly everyone can relate to unrequited love, even if their identities and politics are very different. That’s why we chose this subject as the starting point. As we went deeper in our explorations we understood that beneath the experience of rejection is a whole set of questions and issues: what is ‘normal’ and who decides what is ‘abnormal?’ How can society accept some things as ‘normal’ that are so dehumanizing, and on the other hand, see some forms of love as ‘abnormal?’ What is this desire that we all have to be ‘normal’ or to be on the ‘inside’ of certain social circles? Even though being ‘outside’ is sometimes painful, how is it also liberating?”

Valdez says that his longtime association with Assaf and Arreola has made him, as he puts it, “open my mind more in accepting individuals for who they are and not on physical limitations and sexual preferences they might have. By seeing and understanding the struggles that a lesbian goes through, I was forced to confront my own prejudices and phobias about being disabled.”

This, of course, is in the full Pangea-Pueblo spirit. As Teatro del Pueblo Artistic Director Al Justiniano asserts, “Pangea and Teatro are

are committed to bringing to the stage voices that reflect the diversity and the complexities of our society.”



American Family. Photo by Petronella Ytsma

American Family

Mar. 16 – Apr. 7

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www.parksquaretheatre.org

Carlyle Brown, one of the juiciest socio-political minds writing plays today, once again taps into past historical currents in a way that speaks to the present day. He describes his lat-

est: “In *American Family*, a white pre-teen girl, Mary Ellen (Megan Fischer), is taken away from her trans-racial family by her biological father (John Middleton) because in Alabama in 1964 inter-racial marriage is illegal. As a grown young woman, Mary Ellen (Tracey Maloney) is haunted by her past and the life she has lost and the consequences that the bigotry of her father has set upon her. Now she returns to the life she left behind to meet her mixed-race half brother (Michael Terrell Brown) who she has never met, to heal the confusion and horrors of those lost years and to finally return to her real home and family. It is a story that explores how the past is always present.”

Babel

Through Mar. 25

Nimbus Theatre, 1517 Central Av. NE, Mpls.

(612) 548-1380

www.nimbustheatre.com

Attention Secret Society Buffs! Playwright-director Josh Cragun, who dwells in the theater of ideas, will take you to an endless library, as he puts it, “born from the fall of an ancient civilization. *Babel* is fundamentally about the tension between *hubris* and humans’ need to discover and make their world better. When do we start to know so much that we

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begin to think of ourselves as gods, and when do we amass so much knowledge that it becomes meaningless?"

Dial 'M' for Murder

Through Mar. 18

Jungle Theater, 2951 Lyndale Av. So., Mpls.

(612) 822-7063

www.jungletheater.com

Playwright Frederick Knott's 1952 hit brings to mind great brooding films of that time like *The Asphalt Jungle* and *Executive Suite*—gripping depictions of the male identity crisis specific to the post World War II era. Many young and middle-aged men could not fit back into traditional marriage and/or gain steady financial footing. To compensate, as these works reveal, they desperately turn to ruthlessness and target others. Knott's thriller hinges on gullible wifely obedience that unwittingly enables grisly treachery. That post-war male identity crisis and the misogyny it fostered comes through director Bain Boehlke's handsome edge-of-your-seat revival.

The Story of My Life

Through Mar. 25

Illusion Theatre, 528 Hennepin Av., Mpls.

(612) 339-4944

www.aboutmmt.org

Six years ago, Steven Meerdink and Kevin Hansen shared *Lavender's* top spot for Best Actors in a Musical for Minneapolis Musical Theatre's *La Cage Aux Folles*. Now MMT's two Co-Founders have teamed up again for the first time since then in a touching musical about two men who have been friends since childhood, written by Brian Hill with music and lyrics by Neil Bartram.

Hansen, who will retire from MMT after this season, plays Alvin and says his character "comes at friendship from a pretty clear perspective: 'If you commit, you see it through.' There aren't many gray areas for him. If there is one, it is in his feelings for Thomas. It is his struggle with those feelings that leaves questions for all involved as to whether those feelings ultimately lead to Alvin's fate."

Meerdink notes that Thomas is driven by societal expectations: "He approaches his life as he feels he is supposed to. He also pushes himself to do everything right, putting a great deal of pressure on himself. This is why he becomes so fascinated with the individuality that Alvin displays. It also becomes his downfall in trying to develop relationships. He has trouble committing to a connection with someone who is not perfect." □



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By Bob Beverage and Ron Peluso Music selection by Bob Beverage

MARCH 3 – 25

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Social Six-Pack deal on March 9
Pizza and a Play March 23 at 6:30 p.m.

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The St. Paul Gangster Musical

By David Hawley Music and lyrics by Drew Jansen
Directed by Noah Bremer of Live Action Set

APRIL 21–MAY 20

1934. Minnesota's once-quiet capital is the preferred vacation spot for America's most notorious gangsters. That's all about to change when J. Edgar Hoover and his newly minted G-men roll into town.

ADDITIONAL FUN
Speak-Easy Dinner Party April 21 at 6 p.m.
Social Six-Pack deal on April 27
Pizza and a Play May 18 at 6:30 p.m.
St. Paul Gangster Tours dates at HistoryTheatre.com

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history theatre

651.292.4323 30 East 10th Street, St. Paul **www.HistoryTheatre.com**



Memphis. Photo by Paul Kolnik

Memphis

Mar.13 – 25

Ordway Center, 345 Washington St., St. Paul

(651) 224-4222

www.ordway.org

The 2010 Tony-winner for Best Musical recalls the time when interracial love was perilously taboo. National tour ensemble member, Evan Autio, shares that it “takes you to a place where you start caring about Felicia and Huey and their love story. You can relate to them because you have either felt this way about someone or you know someone who feels that way about you. Or with the gay community, how it hits me so hard, is because I would love the same rights that they are fighting for at the time. They would love to be together but can’t because she’s black and he’s white. And I think it kind of plays on today with us, trying to get the same rights as a straight couple.” –J.T.

The Amen Corner

May 5 – June 1

Guthrie Theater, 818 So. 2nd St., Mpls

(612) 377-2224

www.guthrietheater.org

Guthrie and Penumbra Theatres team up for a classic play by iconic gay African-American James Baldwin (1924-87). Sarah Bellamy, known for her first-rate research for Penumbra productions, points out that “since his explosion into the literary scene in the early ’50s, Baldwin stirred controversy on all sides. He courageously laid bare some of his most private struggles—from his upbringing in the church and his time in the pulpit as a Pentecostal preacher to the realization of his homosexuality and the tensions between the two.”

She adds how Baldwin also indicted “white liberalism that lauded relationships with ‘Special Negroes’ but largely avoided the question of race in America. It has also been convenient for various groups to cordon off what may complicate their engagement of Baldwin’s work in order to service their own political agenda—whether it be a dismissal of his homosexuality or an erasure of his blackness.” –J.T.



Wade Vaughn acting in *Compleat Female Stage Beauty*.
Photo by Jerald Lee Photography

Compleat Female Stage Beauty

May 18 – June 3

Minneapolis Theatre Garage, 711 W. Franklin Av., Mpls.

(612) 375-0300

www.walkingshadowcompany.org

Local playwright Jeffrey Hatcher’s historical masterpiece is one of the great plays of our time and was made into one of the great films of the ’00s. Finally it will get its first actual local production thanks to Walking Shadow. Set in the 1600s when women were first introduced to the English stage (hence, the term ‘actress’), director John Heimbuch reminds us that “prior to this, female roles were entirely played by men, often boy apprentices, who learned to create an idealized version of femininity onstage. This was true throughout the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras until the theaters were closed during the Puritan interregnum. When the monarch was restored to the throne, theaters initially resumed the tradition of men-as-women, but during his time in France, the new monarch, Charles I, had developed an appreciation for females onstage—as was the norm in France—and the old practice was quickly abolished.” –J.T.



Futurity. Photo by Sam Hough

Futurity

Apr. 26-28

Walker Art Center, 1750 Hennepin Av., Mpls.

(612) 375-7600

www.walkerart.org

An unusual combination of Civil War and sci-fi manifests in this new work with music by The Lisps, an indie rock band that melds folk/Americana with new music forms. An inventor and a mathematician collaborate across space and time to create steam-powered artificial intelligence to end war. Soho Rep Artistic Director Sarah Benson shares, "As with all The Lisps' music, the musical looks forwards and backwards at the same time. The chorus of soldiers are played by a diverse range of men and women and at the Walker we will be casting several local actors in these roles. We are not taking a period approach where we are in any way trying to accurately reflect the Civil War. For example, we have a black actor playing the General." —J.T.

Zenon Dance Co.'s 29th Season Show

May 4 -13

Cowles Center for Dance & the Performing Arts, 528 Hennepin Av., Mpls.

(612) 206-3600

www.thecowlescenter.org

Choreographer Morgan Thorson's *All Parts*



Zenon Dance Co. Photo by William Cameron

Are Welcome is part of the region's top contemporary dance company's 20th season show. She says it "brings everything that makes us human into the choreographic process by way of observation, same sex attraction, flipping, dominance, rejection, a desire for intimacy, lies, compartmentalizing, obedience, manipulation, wanting to be seen, arrogance, love, the international sign for NO—even running out of time and bad habits. It's an effort to stare down our most conflicted feelings about life through dance and say goodbye to all of those who can't get on board. At times charming and then appealing, *All Parts Are Welcome* possesses our most powerful and, dare I say, annoying traits in a fanfare of insistent and overstated sequences and tableaux. During the creative process everyone put everything they had into making this work, at the risk of losing it all. The love was palpable. In fact, this process was so queer that I had an affair with each and every one of them."

But Thorson's timeliness will be contrasted with choreographer Mariusz Olszewski's beguiling nostalgic twists in *Pink Martini*. The viscerally lyrical rhythms of 1950s cha-cha and mambo are splendidly matched with the sounds of Perez Prado and His Orchestra and Rosemary Clooney. —J.T.

Doubt: A Parable

Apr. 20 – May 13

Park Square Theatre, 20 W. 7th Pl., St. Paul

(651) 291-7005

www.parksquaretheatre.org

This Tony- and Pulitzer-winning drama concerns what director Craig Johnson calls "the appalling child sexual abuse scandal that continues to rock the Catholic Church, and as playwright John Patrick Shanley has said, the final act

should be the discussion that audience members have debating the 'did he or didn't he' question. But the story expands to include the tension between levels of hierarchical power, between men and women, between protection that petrifies into control, and freedom that risks safety."

If you saw the seriously flawed 2008 film that Shanley, a stellar playwright, foolishly directed, you were cheated by the miscasting of Philip Seymour Hoffman, a stellar actor ironically misdirected by Shanley himself to play Father Flynn, the priest in question, as a slob. Worse still, scenes that not even in the play further reinforced that. So it's much easier to totally stereotype Flynn as a pedophile and not examine the situation the play puts forth. The opposite of what Shanley wanted!

However, in casting the charismatic, dynamic, and classically handsome David Mann as Flynn, Johnson (*who I did not communicate with about this at all*) has rightly done precisely what Shanley intended for his original play. Therefore, I hope those whose only encounter with *Doubt* is the film will see Park Square's production. It's much, much harder to believe a man with all the advantages, attractive to other attractive adults, would commit such a heinous crime as opposed to someone who doesn't measure up to the masculine ideal, like Hoffmann's slanted portrayal. If only it could be remade as a film directed by Mike Nichols with Michael Fassbender as Flynn. Instead, I suspect Mann will get it right and put things right and expand his already broad fan base. —J.T. ➔



SPRING ARTS PREVIEW | John Townsend & Kathleen Watson



Ashley Gold. Photo by Sophia Hantzes

Ashley Gold

March 24 11:00pm
Dakota Jazz Club, 1010 Nicollet Mall,
Mpls
(612) 332-1010
www.dakotacooks.com

If you've missed Ashley Gold's residency at the Amsterdam, you have another chance to catch up with this soulful sweetheart at the Dakota Jazz Club. With her sensual voice and intricate lyrics, Gold is one of the hottest new musicians to follow in the Twin Cities music scene. Listen to one song from this self-proclaimed "closeted singer," and you'll be glad she's finally sharing her talent with the world. --K.W.

Lisa Lampanelli

March 30, 8pm
Mystic Showroom, 2400 Mystic Lake
Bldv, Prior Lake
(952) 445-9000
www.mysticlake.com/lisalampanelli2012

Need another reason to love Lisa Lampanelli? When her May show was picketed by the Westboro Baptist Church, the sassy and brassy comedienne promised to donate \$1,000 to the Gay Men's Health Crisis organization for every protester who showed up. Sending \$50,000 to the charity "courtesy of Westboro Baptist Church," she's proven herself to be an equal-opportunity of-



Lisa Lampanelli. Photo Courtesy of Mystic Lake Casino Hotel

fender with a heart of gold. This "Queen of Mean" dishes out insults that are bound to make even the naughtiest people blush. --K.W.

Wits at the Fitz: Tim Meadows with musical guest Rhett Miller

The Fitzgerald Theater
Friday, March 30, 8:00pm
\$32
www.minnesota.publicradio.org/radio/programs/wits/
 Known for his nine-year stint with Saturday Night Live, Tim Meadows will have audience members rolling in the aisles during his special appearance at Wits at the Fitz. As if Meadows's hysterical imper-



Rhett Miller. Photo by Jason Jenik
 Tim Meadows. Photo courtesy of MPR



An Horse. Photo by Shervin Lainez

sonations aren't enough to attract a crowd, the event will also feature musician Rhett Miller, who has men and women swooning all across the country. Although hearts broke when the Old 97's front-man married his wife, his support for the GLBT community and his versatile voice keep his listeners lusting after this charismatic and sensitive rocker. --K.W.

An Horse

March 31, 7:00pm
First Ave Mainroom, 701 First Ave, Mpls
(612) 332-1775
www.first-avenue.com

An Horse, the adorable Australian indie-rock duo comprised of lesbian Kate Cooper and Damon Cox, will take the United States by storm during their upcoming March tour. As coworkers in a record store in Australia, the pair has been musically inseparable since 2009. After spending time on the road with big-name bands like Tegan & Sara, Death Cab for Cutie, and Silversun Pickups, An Horse has truly stepped out of the shadows and into the spotlight. --K.W.

Barry Manilow

April 13, 7:30pm
Xcel Energy Center, 199 W Kellogg
Blvd, St Paul
www.xcel.center-tickets.com
(651) 265-4800

Charismatic crooner Barry Manilow has been serenading the world for 30 years, and fans from the Twin Cities will be able to see the icon sing his greatest hits in April. With classics like "Mandy" and "Copacabana," Manilow is one of the most successful adult contemporary singers of all time, and there's no telling when the world will stop singing his music. --K.W.

Melissa Etheridge

April 21, 8pm
Mystic Showroom, 2400 Mystic Lake
Blvd, Prior Lake
(952) 445-9000
www.mysticlake.com





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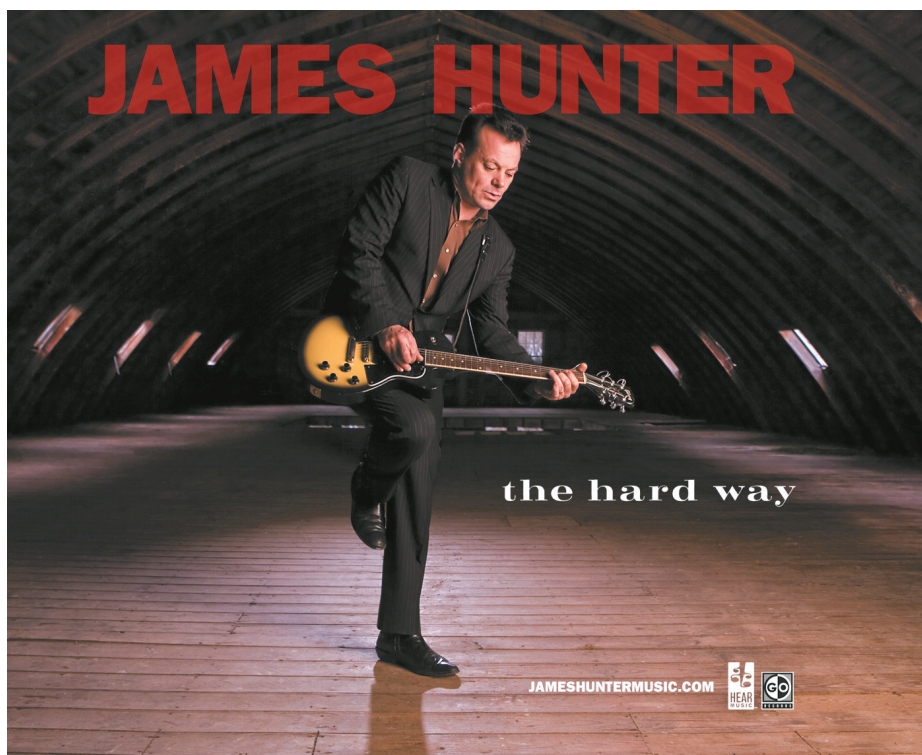
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LAVENDER

SPRING ARTS PREVIEW | John Townsend & Kathleen Watson



James Hunter. Photo Courtesy of James Hunter

Iconic lesbian musician Melissa Etheridge has come a long way from playing in lesbian dive bars in the 1980s. Originally turned down by a top notch lesbian record label, Etheridge has paved her own way to stardom in the folk-rock world. The confessional lyrics of songs like "Come to my Window" earned her Grammy fame, and her music continues to inspire and empower the GLBT community. --K.W.

James Hunter

April 24-25, 7:00pm
Dakota Jazz Club, 1010 Nicollet Mall,
Mpls
(612) 332-1010
www.dakotacooks.com

Blues and R&B fans will delight in the complexity of James Hunter's sound. The perfect balance of clarity and spunk, Hunter's voice is a modern spin on times gone by. His songs simultaneously ring with hints of nostalgia and sass reminiscent of blues standards. Part Robert Johnson and part Amy Winehouse, James Hunter's style is truly groovy. --K.W.



Big Freedia & the Divas.
 Photo Courtesy of Windish Agency

Big Freedia & The Divas

May 11th, 9:00pm
Turf Club, 1601 University Ave W, St Paul
(651) 647-0486
www.turfclub.net

Known as the "Queen Diva of Bounce Music," Big Freedia makes booties shake to the new urban music from the New Orleans housing projects. Big Freedia has been pumping up the crowd with her hypnotic beats and call-and-response choruses all across the country, and her work has recently caught the attention of Snoop Dogg and Spank Rock. Featuring gay and cross-dressing musicians and dancers, Big Freedia & The Divas are guaranteed to be a good time! --K.W.



The Laramie Project.
 Photo by Holly Dorst

The Laramie Project

April 5-14
Macalester Theatre and Dance
Macalester College Mainstage, 1600
Grand Ave, Mpls
651-696-6359
www.macalester.edu/theatreanddance

Created in the aftermath of the 1998 murder of gay student Matthew Shepard, *The Laramie Project* explores how individuals in Shepard's Wyoming community reacted to the hate crime. By diving into the psyches of people who knew Shepard, this dynamic play confronts homophobia head on and advocates for tolerance. Director Harry Waters, Jr. notes that "there are issues in this play that bring up very personal and private feelings, especially among those of us who are old timers in both making theater and being/living through memorable tough times of being gay." --K.W.

Spring Awakening

April 12-May 6

University of Minnesota with Theatre Latte Da!

Rarig Center, 330 21st Ave S, Mpls

612-624-2345

www.tickets.umn.edu

The Broadway sensation *Spring Awakening* follows the emotional journeys of adolescents on the brink of sexual maturation. With no support from the adults in their lives, the teens struggle to deal with unplanned pregnancies, sexual abuse, homosexuality, and depression. Based on a play that was banned in 1891, this rock musical allows the adolescents to give a voice to their inner torments. As the winner of eight Tony Awards and named "Best Musical of the Year," this angst-filled performance will remind viewers of the tribulations faced in their own teen years. --K.W.

Twelfth Night

April 20-28

Hamline University

Anne Simley Theater, 1530 Hewitt Ave, St Paul

651-523-2905

tickets@hamline.edu

Hailed as one of Shakespeare's most beloved comedies, *Twelfth Night* is a wild journey through love, social climbing, and the uncertainty of gender. When Viola is shipwrecked on an island, she creates a male identity in order to pass in society--only to find herself caught up in a love triangle with people who don't know her true gender identity. Through hilarious hoodwinks and sentimental confessions, the characters attempt to find love in an uncertain world. --K.W.





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SPRING ARTS PREVIEW | John Townsend & Kathleen Watson

Titanic Orchestra**April 13-22****Augsburg College****Tjornhom-Nelson Theater, 2211 River-****side Ave, Mpls****612-330-1257****boxoffice@augsborg.edu**

What do you do when you're waiting for a train that never comes? The four vagabonds in *Titanic Orchestra* drunkenly philosophize about life until a mysterious visitor makes his way onto the scene, making them question everything they've grown to know. The bare-bones plot allows the deep relationships between characters to become the highlight. According to cast member Hannah Youngquist, "one of the main things that the characters are trying to grapple with are the boundaries between reality and illusion. It will be interesting for audience members to go through seeing our interactions and thoughts about it, the audience members will be able to grapple with the boundary also." --K.W.

k.d. lang and the Siss Boom Bang**May 10, 7:30pm****The O'Shaughnessy at St. Catherine University****651-690-6700****www.oshoughnessy.stkate.edu**

Pop and country star k.d. lang has been captivating audiences since the 1980s, and there's no telling when she's ever going to stop. The openly gay Canadian musician is joined by five stellar musicians to create a new group that's bound to rock the O'Shaughnessy. Along with being an award-winning singer, lang's activism for gay rights, animal rights, and Tibetan human rights makes her a musician worth supporting—and that's something to sing about. --K.W.

Menopause The Musical**April 13-14****GFour Productions****The O'Shaughnessy at St. Catherine University****651-690-6700****www.oshoughnessy.stkate.edu**

Who said menopause can't be fun? *Menopause The Musical* is the "Hilarious Celebration of Women and Change" that will have you thoroughly enjoying the experiences of maturing women. Using hit tunes from the '60s, '70s, and '80s, four women bond over their changing bodies in order to create a wild and light-hearted look at menopause. Empowering and delightful, this musical encourages a healthy dialogue about The Change while entertaining audiences of all ages. --K.W.

*Mamma Mia!* Photo by Joan Marcus***Mamma Mia!*****April 24-29****Orpheum Theatre, 910 Hennepin Ave, Mpls****1.800.982.2787****www.hennepintheatretrust.org**

Relive the finest days of disco with *Mamma Mia!*, the hit musical featuring tunes from the 1970s musical super-group ABBA. Using some of the most popular songs of the era, this whimsi-

cal musical follows Sophie, a bride-to-be, on her adventure to find her biological father. When she invites three different possible fathers to the wedding, Sophie's mother gets caught up in a tangle of scandal, surprise, and love that never dies. You'll find yourself singing along with this ultimate feel-good experience! --K.W. ➔

JIN XING

Continued on page 28

move one dancer propels himself in a backwards jump and lands so gracefully in his partner's arms that it seems almost as though the two men are connected through magic wires invisible to the audience's eyes.

Invisible is quite the opposite of what Jin Xing is in China's pop culture scene. She is a frequent guest star on the Chinese versions of "American Idol" and "So You Think You Can Dance" Says Xing with a laugh, "I'm the jewelry for those shows. I'm the bitchy one. But people love me. I'm bitchy but I tell the truth." Her talents have also extended to various roles in other TV shows, film work, and theatre. The scope and reach of her visions as a performer seem to stretch endlessly, yet it is clear her fantasies are strongly rooted in reality, as she says, "I have many dreams, but I'm not a dreamer. I make dreams come true."

An understanding of both sexes she says has only helped her in creating dance. Seemingly unburdened by her personal challenges she in fact views her past as an asset. Having lived as both a man and a woman she says she can now understand both male and female mentalities. "I see two worlds" she says, calling it a gift as a choreographer to have perspective not as a man or woman but as a human being.

I ask Jin Xing about how transgender individuals are viewed in China as opposed to the United States. She tells me in China the transgender population is seen as separate from the gay population. Here in America the two tend to be grouped together more often, she explains. This clustering of distinct identities is not always accurate according to the artist. Often, too, transgender individuals are confused with transvestites, another mistake she notes. She is a straight female born in a male body. Now, due to medical procedures, her outer appearance aligns with her inner identity. Those living gay and transgender lifestyles are just asking for freedom she tells me, a freedom she hopes to give back to others by helping to foster their understanding of these issues.

Says the dynamic woman simply, "We share one space, we breathe together."

The "Jin Xing Dance Theatre Shanghai" continues their first national tour across the United States leaving Minnesota for Kansas. ■

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Million Dollar Quartet. Photo by Joan Marcus

Million Dollar Quartet

March 27-April 1

**State Theatre, 805 Hennepin Ave, Mpls
1.800.982.2787**

www.hennepintheatretrust.org

Inspired by a famous recording session of rock-and-roll legends Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash, Jerry Lee Lewis, and Carl Perkins, *Million Dollar Quartet* is bound to tear the roof off the theatre. This musical examines each icon's personal life and the bonds formed between some of the greatest musicians of all time. With favorites like "Great Balls of Fire" and "I Walk the Line," *Million Dollar Quartet* offers a wild and passionate portrayal of the "greatest jam session of all time." --K.W.

Elton John

Sunday, April 22 8:00pm

**Verizon Wireless Center, Civic Center
Plaza, Mankato
800-745-3000**

www.verizonwirelesscentermn.com

As one of the most highly celebrated musi-

cians in the world, Sir Elton John has been cranking out favorites since 1969. This rock and roll legend has sold over 250 million records worldwide, and it's impossible to find someone who doesn't know about his music. As an openly gay activist for GLBT rights, Elton John is an inspiration to the queer community. IT'S ELTON JOHN... NEED WE SAY MORE? --K.W.

Venus DeMars

Friday, March 9 7:30pm

**Patrick's Cabaret, 3010 Minnehaha Ave S,
Mpls**

(612) 724-6273

http://www.venusdemars.com/patricks_cabaret/

Trans front-woman of All the Pretty Horses, Venus DeMars will be performing a solo acoustic set in Patrick's newly renovated space. Part glam rock, part acoustic, Venus is known for her versatile style and experimental performance art. With her unabashed love for the fetish community, Venus DeMars pushes social boundaries and delivers a musical experience unlike any other. --K.W.



515- The Tour. Photo Sophia Hantzes

515 - The Tour

**Various Dates and Times
Throughout the State
www.project515.org**

515 is an artistic representation of the real-life discrimination faced by same sex couples who reside in this state. MN law



Venus DeMars. Photo by Sophia Hantzes

defines marriage to be between one man and one woman. Using this definition, research has shown there are at least 515 laws in our state that exclude same-sex couples from certain rights and benefits that should be provided to everyone. 515 highlights many of these laws through song, theater and dance. It's a show that brings a serious message to people who otherwise may never hear about it. We hope to change the state of dialogue in MN around the subject of same-sex equality. 515 presents a vision of a world of equality where all families are equally valued and respected under the law and in their homes, neighborhoods, workplaces and communities. 515 - The Tour is a theatrical presentation of 515 laws in Minnesota that discriminate against same-sex couples. 60 minutes, free and open to the public. 515 - The Tour is a show that brings a serious message to people who otherwise may never hear about it. Check out www.project515.org - click on Participate - and view the 515 Players tab. -Bryan Gerber □

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Sarah Hicks and Sam Bergman. Photo by Jake Armour

Minnesota Orchestra 101

Think that the Minnesota Orchestra is just for blue bloods, all duded up in white tie and pearls? That you have to have had decades of music lessons under your belt to tell one dead composer from another? Or, actually enjoy them, without wondering when you're supposed to clap?

Think again. That might have been your granddaddy's concert-going, but nowadays the Orchestra boasts a listener-friendly persona—particularly in its intriguing *Inside the Classics* series. Orchestra violist Sam Bergman acts as host (he doesn't wear a tux), tag-teaming with stylin' young conductor Sarah Hicks (neither does she), bringing what's likely to be a young, new audience up-close and personal with a particular piece from the Top of the Classics chart.

In the first half of these informal evenings, Sarah chats about the night's selection, calling on various players to demonstrate her observations. Sam joins in, talking about the composer, what he (it's usually a he) was up to, who influenced his style (which Sam asks players to demonstrate), and why it's found an abiding place in the repertoire—inviting the percussionist, perhaps, to tell folks how he prepares for his big bang, or asking a violinist how the heck she can move her fingers that fast.

Then, after the intermission, all the bits and pieces come together with a straight run-through of the number—in which, by now, you know what to listen for like a pro.

Spring's *Intro* concerts, March 30 and 31, take this format a step farther—and

even more user-friendly, some might say. It will feature the world premiere of a piece by young Chicago composer Judd Greenstein, whom the Orchestra commissioned to write for them. Now, usually commissioned pieces—rather a rarity, and not cheap—are paid for by one or two wealthy donors ponying up. But last season, Sarah and Sam, pleased with their *Intro*'s populist format, came up with the idea of a symphonic piece being commissioned by—and paid for by—this very group of mostly first-timers. They asked *Intro* audience members to become micro-commissioners by contributing—by check, by email, or tossing a dollar or two in the cello case—to fund a new work.

Voilà: \$20,000 was raised by 400 first-time donors. The result is on the March program, and Judd will be here to talk about the exciting process. Tickets begin at just \$20.

Now that you're feeling at home in the hall, consider returning for what Director of Public Relations Gwen Pappas recommends as another easy-listening concert, when Maestro Osmo Vänskä leads the Orchestra in Beethoven's Symphony No. 6, the Pastoral, April 11-14. Why?

Says Pappas, "Vänskä and the Minnesota Orchestra have won awards for their Beethoven repertoire, so—as an infrequent concertgoer—start with the best! It evokes life in the countryside; you can hear the thunderstorm. It's a good 'entry' piece."

Then return for the June 14-15 concerts, which she calls "a walk down memory lane." Before the hall is closed for renovation next season (the Orchestra will perform in the Convention Center), it's offering a recap of its musical history since the hall opened in 1974. Along with Osmo, the Orchestra's other conductors will take part: Sarah Hicks of Pops fame; Andrew Litton, who helms Sommerfest; Irvin Mayfield, the jazz go-to—even a return of Conductor Emeritus Stanislaw Scrowaczewsky, who held the baton the year the hall opened. "It'll be a variety show—very entertaining," Pappas promises. Rush-line tickets are generally available starting at \$20 for some of the best seats in the house. Or, first-timers can get two tickets for only \$10 for selected concerts. For info, visit www.minnesotaorchestra.org. □

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BALLS TO THE WALBERG

Lavender is starting a new sports column to run in every issue, each time profiling a different athlete who is both in the community as well as in the sports scene. Our first interview features Rachel Walberg of the North Star Roller Girls. Read it here but go online to the Lavender website to see video footage of “Balls to the Walberg” at www.LavenderMagazine.com.

Q: What is your derby name?

A: My derby name is Balls To The Walberg and I am number four.

Q: How do you get your derby names?

A: The derby name is generally something that a girl when she is in the process of trying out or even just watching roller derby for the first time and says, “I have an idea for the best derby name” And I was brainstorming with my friends the first couple of bouts I went to and came up with some good ones. And one of the things is only one person can have that derby name in the world, and there is a database of derby names. So the first derby name that I wanted, I couldn’t have because it was taken. Then I decided on another derby name that I wanted, and I submitted it to the database, and it was actually taken by somebody who had submitted just before us. And I was googling the name before it all went through, and it was in fact taken by one of the girls in Superior. So she is my arch nemesis now. Not really. But I skated with her and it was fun. So after all that I was very upset and I was talking to my partner, Amanda, and I said, “I just really need a good name!” And she is extremely witty and came up with the name for me. Balls to the Walberg. And my last name is Walberg. So there we go. It just makes sense.

Q: What can we expect if we come to a bout/roller derby?

A: Well if you come to a bout you can expect to have a really awesome time. It is a lot of athleticism. The women I play with are extremely dedicated to the sport. A lot of them are new and a lot of them are veterans. I am in my second season now, so I am in the middle of the pact there. I’ve been getting my feet underneath me in terms of that. But what a fan can expect is to walk in and to meet all of the players because we are sort of just hanging out around the door or with the people we know that are coming in. And there are a lot of fun things for families and kids to do. We have a photo booth at every bout that is theme-based because we have a theme for every bout. The last bout was the zombie prom. So we had a prom balloon arch and prom crowns. So that is fun. We have a pre show as well has a half time show in addition to the excellent roller derby that you can expect. I think that is largely what you can expect.

Q: What’s it like being on the GLBT sports scene and how does that effect your sexuality being in it?

A: I, in general, it is a part of almost everything you do in life in the same way as most aspects of your life are floating around. Everybody is extremely friendly. It is a very supportive environment. It is nice to have a lot of people around who are nice and accepting and curious about you. I think that is true of any inclusive community. I don’t know if I think that being apart of the sports community is different than being apart of any other community. And I definitely do think that the roller derby is a unique place within the female athletic realm in which is very accepted to be queer and awesome not to be. And the accept you for who you are.

Q: How did you get into being a roller girl?

A: Well I was actually working a really bad job two years ago and I worked in the evenings and I never had any fun except on the weekends when I went to see roller derby for the first time. I thought, this seems like the thing I need to do this and have fun and do something that doesn’t make me miserable. I was so happy the first time I saw roller derby. So I went to the Internet and I figured out where I could get involved in roller derby in the Twin Cities. Of course the roller dome is a big location that you can always go skate at. So I got some skates off of a skater and I went to the roller dome and skate around a lot. I was fairly natural at it. Then I quit my terrible job and started to go to the roller dome every night. Then I tried out and got into North Star that year and it was great.

Q: How much time do you spend practicing?

A: Practices are usually available between two and four days a week. And they are about 2 hours long. I get to practice generally two times a week. We have a practice minimum just to make sure everyone is keeping up with the athleticism and being safe as they play. We are generally required to practice around four hours a week.

Q: Have you gotten any injuries?

A: I get bruises all the time. I usually have between four and seven bruises on me at any time. But not bad bruises. A lot of people could get worse bruises. My worst injury is at a practice once and I took a frontal block to my neck. So not in terms of neck injuries but it did compress my windpipe and I had some trouble breathing for a little while. It was really bad for two hours. But I am lucky to not have been injured badly so far. □

If you would like to attend an upcoming bout there are two more this season for the North Star Roller Girls. They are March 24th and April 28th. To get involved, visit northstarrollergirls.com





Gay Lives
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At a recent in-store at Treehouse Records, Craig Finn noted that folks were worried about his emotional state in the wake of this solo album, as the Lifter Puller/Hold Steady front man's music took a decidedly darker direction. That came not so much from his own state, but the state where he made the album: Texas and country-western can bring out the maudlin in anyone. *Clear Heart Full Eyes* drops us into a world of late-night confessions, with a healthy dose of pedal-steel guitar to move it along. Finn doesn't lose the crisp storytelling that has made the Hold Steady one of the best rock bands of the last decade, and the moments of levity (the bouncy "New Friend Jesus" comes to mind) help to temper the darker lands here.



Imperial Teen **Feel the Sound**

Though they've been around for 16 years, Imperial Teen still provides a fresh sound. They have a back-to-basics pop-rock sound that is hard to resist and hasn't worn out its welcome. Though there are heavy ties to punk rock, the band's sound leans as much on classic '60s pop and delightful dual male/female vocals. That's clear on the opening track and single, "Runaway," which provides a bit of Bee Gees swagger to the proceedings for an absolutely terrific tune. I would have liked a bit more rocking here, but out leader Roddy Bottum (also of Faith No More) and the band craft a fun set of tunes that feel like the product of a bunch of fresh-faced teenagers. Not bad for someone pushing 50.



Lana Del Rey **Born to Die**

The internet age has given artists their best chance to break themselves into the mainstream. It worked for Justin Bieber, who turned that attention into a heartthrob success. The jury is still out on Lana Del Rey, who has made a splash with her early videos and *Born to Die*. That internet attention turned sour after a disastrous appearance on SNL. *Born to Die* doesn't provide much hope on its own. It doesn't help that I've grown weary of the album's best track, "Video Games," via overplay in the last few months. Beyond that, most of this is just a slog as an inexperienced artist tries to find her footing. It's something that should be done at the demo stage, not on Interscope.



Air **Le Voyage Dans La Lune**

Somehow, it's absolutely appropriate that these French art rockers would take Georges Méliès's silent film classic *Le Voyage Dans La Lune* as inspiration for an album. The band has always enjoyed exploring the cosmic in their music, like a disco-influenced Pink Floyd. The album, meant as a soundtrack for the innovative, 1902 film, is tantalizingly brief. Still, it manages to create the perfect aural atmosphere for a trip to outer space. Like their *Virgin Suicides* soundtrack, it's hard to separate the music here from the film itself, though there are a few standouts that work well as songs, such as "Seven Stars," which features vocal assistance from Beach House's Victoria Legrand. In the end, what I want to do most is watch the film. So, mission accomplished.

A wide-angle, nighttime photograph of the Memphis skyline. In the foreground, the Scott Bridge, a large steel truss bridge, spans the Mississippi River. The bridge is illuminated with warm lights, and its reflection is visible in the water. In the background, the city skyline is lit up with various lights, including tall skyscrapers and smaller buildings. The sky is a deep blue, and the overall atmosphere is vibrant and urban.

Million Dollar Memphis

MEMPHIS IS the city of the Three Kings—no, not those guys on camels, but three 20th-century fellas with miraculous stories of their own: B.B. King, Martin Luther King, Jr.—and Elvis. The city's identity is carved from the two rich veins they represent: music and race relations. The abiding message in Memphis is how they intertwined.

Now, Memphis is not your Nashville, all slicked up for company. Memphis is a gritty city, and proud of it: “The bad boy in the

corner” of the state, its citizens insist. And make no mistake, “It’s not a Southern city, either. It’s a river city,” declares Carol Perel, curator of the Cotton Museum. “It was the big dog of the cotton industry. Back in the day, there were 200 traders here on Cotton Row, selling to the mills of England.”

These days, the action centers on Beale Street, the city’s original African American hub. Recalls B.B. King, “It was like college, where we helped each other: shops, cafes, hotels, clubs. It’s where

everybody came on a Saturday night.”

Still is. The two-block stretch is the Mecca for live music, lit by flashing neon and accented by kids flipping down the street for tips. Close by stands Rock 'n' Soul Museum, your intro to Memphis Music 101. Start your visit here to absorb the social and musical gumbo that put Memphis on the map, from the songs of black sharecroppers, church gospel, jazz, blues and country, absorbed through the radio on a farmer's kitchen table.

With the advent of radio, black and white music came together, led by black disc jockey-musicians like B.B. King at WDIA, which played the provocative rock and soul that lured white boys from Pat Boone—doing for music what, later, what Dr. King would do for civil rights.

Now you're set to visit the recording studios themselves, starting with Stax, the Vatican of Soul, launched in 1957. Because its backers put music first, the place was colorblind—“integrated in a highly segregated city. Going to Stax was like going to church,” its director declares. Among the “choir” were Otis Redding, Isaac Hayes, and Aretha Franklin.

Over at Sun Records, its plucky founder, Sam Phillips, can claim “the Birthplace of rock 'n' roll.” “Here's where it all started,”

trumpets our tour guide in the studio where, for \$3, anyone could waltz in and record a song—including Elvis, who made his first recording here. Sent over to WDIA, its DJ played it 15—some say 17—times in a row that first night. Just three years later, those swivel hips were on national TV.

It was here at Sun, one legendary evening, Sam's artists happened to come together to jam: Elvis, Carl Perkins, Johnny Cash, and Jerry Lee Lewis—an event immortalized in the musical “Million Dollar Quartet” coming to Minneapolis March 27. Meanwhile, the Tony-winning “Memphis The Musical,” the DJ's story, arrives in St. Paul March 13.

Well, y'all know where Elvis' first recording led: In 1957, at age 22, he bought Graceland for \$100,000, then redecorated it top to bottom, as you'll see on tour, from the blinding, all-white living room, to the den with three TVs, to the (in)famous Jungle Room, with waterfall, fake fur upholstery and green shag from floor to—and on—the ceiling. There's the racquetball building, the trophy building (awards, jump suits), the private plane—bigger, fancier, than Air Force One—the dozens of shiny autos.

The message is far more somber at the Civil Rights Museum, housed in the Lorraine Motel where Dr. King was murdered. Exhibits lead from the belittling of Blacks, like Aunt Jemima, to positive firsts in sports (Jackie Robinson) and entertainment (Harry Belafonte).

The next section takes on more gravitas as it pursues the story of the push for freedom, starting with slave rebellions on through Jim Crow and the Ku Klux Klan to sit-ins, boycotts and marches: Little Rock to Selma, Birmingham to Memphis, with its I Am a Man movement launched by sanitation workers striking for equal pay, and, inevitably, the tragic day in 1968 when Dr. King was shot on this site. But remember his prophetic words: “Some day there will be a Negro President of this country.”

Back to the Other King: Elvis films play during dinner at The Majestic, featuring mahi, ahi, and fine steaks. His favorite diner was Arcade, where you can revere his booth while carbing up on a breakfast of pancakes with a side of grits and biscuits. The world's lightest biscuits, however, float from the ovens at Blue Plate Cafe, where the waitress (named Ruby, natch), calls you Darlin'. The Cockadoo serves an omelet homage to Elvis featuring PB and bananas. Or head to Brother Juniper's, voted “best breakfast” by

Memphians, for the creamiest grits.

Best burger? Memphian swear by Hugo's, with a local Goose River brew. Best chicken? Check out Gus's shack, with the line out the door. Best ribs? Well, that gets tougher. The Rendezvous has been firing the wood pit in a downtown alleyway since 1948. Come here for a dry rub and sweet tomato sauce. Over at Central BBQ, the bones are moister and the sauce a tad more tangy.

For a taste of modern cooking, head to Eighty8 in the stylin' Madison Hotel, with its purple fainting couches, for mussels with chorizo; spaghetti with sweet-corn sauce; and shortribs in spicy peanut gravy. Or rest your head at the Peabody, the city's grande dame, famed for its daily parade of ducks through the lobby, led by an official Duckmaster in full regalia. Peek into Lansky's in the hotel, where owner Bernard Lansky likes to tell the story of “a young man looking at our displays. I told him, ‘Come on in,’ but he said, ‘I don't have any money, Mr. Lansky, but when I get rich, I'm going to buy you out.’ ‘Don't buy me out, just buy from me,’ I said.” And that's how his friendship with Elvis began.” He'll fit you for your very own blue suede shoes; just don't let nobody step on 'em.

For info, visit www.memphistravel.com. □



(Opposite page) Memphis Skyline Showcasing the Hernando DeSoto Bridge. Photo by Jack Kenner; (This page, clockwise from top) Elvis Statue on Beale. Photo by Vasha Hunt; Neely's Classic BBQ Sandwich. Photo by Andrea Zucker.

SIDEBAR

Midtown is boys' town and home to the Memphis Gay and Lesbian Community Center (www.mglcc.org).

Clubs

Crossroads: classy dance club saluting Cher

The Pumping Station: under the rainbow flag, find pool, darts, beer bashes and happy hour

901 Complex: hip-hop and R&B, drinks and drag shows;

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Metro: the most cosmo, drawing an older crowd before 11, then the younger set

Dru's Place: “where women and sports collide”—pool, darts, cold beer

Club Spectrum: newer and larger: two dance floors, drag shows



SOFTBALL LOVE: THERESA AND TINA

IT'S ONE of those stories, one where I convince you that there is such a thing as love at first sight. A story that may not have begun from the start but will surely last a lifetime. Theresa McGovern and Tina LaCasse met each other as two taken straight women while playing in a softball tournament in Duluth. "When I saw Tina, I instantly was drawn to her," Theresa confidently confessed with a warm smile. Fifteen years apart in age but they could not neglect the connection between one another. That first night up north, Tina and Theresa got to know each other strolling together through the outdoors and beauties of Duluth. With the chill in the air, a fire was made. "She cut down a tree, now who wouldn't fall in love with that?" Tina explained through her laughter. As the fire grew, the more inseparable they became. Whether it was the coldness of the weather

or the warmth of that fire which drew them so close that night whatever it was, they've never parted since.

After their softball tournament, not a day went by that the two did not see each other. Months passed and their friendship enviably shifted into other stronger feelings and denial was no longer an option. The shock of having those type of feelings towards another woman was a life-changing endeavor in itself, but both Tina and Theresa knew those feelings were ones not to be ignored. Tina, a mother of two and wife to her husband, had the concerns of her family to protect as well as the pressures of coming out to everyone as a lesbian. Shortly after, Tina's grandmother had passed away. Theresa, however, was not allowed to attend the funeral while Tina's family was still adjusting to the situation of their relationship. In time, Tina and There-

sa's parents were each supportive and only wanted happiness for their daughters. Likewise, when Theresa's parents passed away four months apart from each other, Tina was her encouragement. Their relationship has survived through age difference, divorce, confusion, and death. Through all the chaos, they found sanity in each other. After seven years of being together, Tina and Theresa see a wedding and children in the future. "I wouldn't change a thing. I am happy with that side of my life, and now look what I get," Tina tells me as she stares directly at Theresa with a loving grin. It was the fire that drew them close, and the fire between them now that keeps them together to this day. Life may not wait for you to start, but there are things in life that are waiting for you to find. ■

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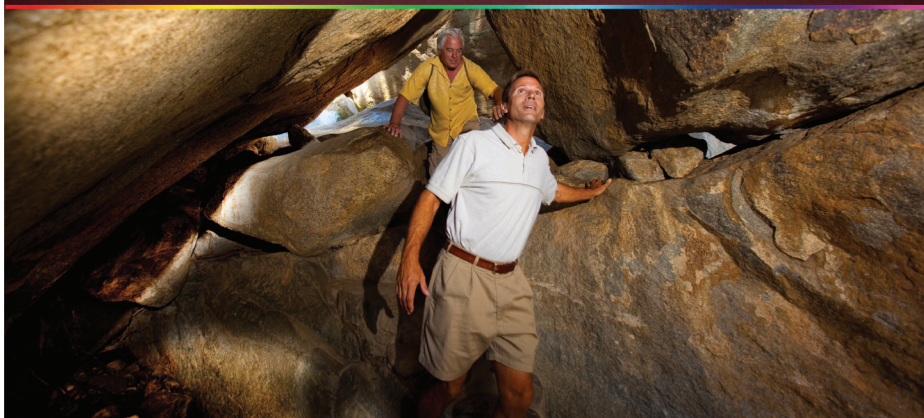
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A Visit to Leather/Gear Night

A MONTHLY “Leather/Gear Night” has been part of the Twin Cities leather scene for several years now. Promoted on Facebook by several younger leathermen, the event has been drawing big (and mostly younger) crowds. I decided to check it out.

The evening starts at 9:00 p.m. but doesn't really get going until 10:15. Since the event is about leather and “gear,” I start to keep an eye out for what constitutes “gear” among this crowd. I see a few wrestling singlets. A uniform shirt. A kilt. Latex. Neoprene. Spandex. A black jock waistband peeking above low-cut jeans. Cadet cap. Muir cap. A leather Civil War cap that turns out to have a built-in blindfold.

Although the crowd is predominantly younger, there also are some older—excuse me, I meant to say *more mature*—men (including your humble columnist). Standing at the

bar is someone I used to see when I first came out. We're both still around, all these years later.

Lumberjack shirt. Leather armband. Mirrored aviator sunglasses. (Is there anyone who *doesn't* look good in mirrored aviator sunglasses?)

Two guys at the edge of the crowd are making out. Someone sees I'm taking notes and asks, “Got any good recipes in there?” Very funny. For your information, sir, I haven't heard a single recipe exchanged this evening. Yet.

Chain collar with lock and leash. Leather puppy paws. Blue jeans. Black jeans.

One of the bartenders estimates there are 100 people in the bar. It seems like more. I see people checking their cell phones—these guys are connected and tech-savvy, and many of them have really interesting wallpaper on the screens of their phones.

Leather harness. Chain suspenders. Tattoos. Mechanic's shirt with patches. A porn star. A female—one of two I see this evening.

House music is pounding on the sound system and the lights on the dance floor are pulsing. Nobody's dancing.

At midnight I think it's starting to clear out, but am told people are just going upstairs to smoke. There's a gentleman in contemporary sport-bike gear next to a gentleman in classic black biker leathers—a nice picture, and a perfect summation of the evening.

I hadn't known what to expect tonight. I was afraid it might all be different, but what drew me to the leather scene years ago is still here. A companion says, “A lot of it has to do with the energy. The energy is good tonight.” I'm happy to see that, judging by this crowd, leather's culture and legacy are in good hands. □



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UGANDA

Gay Ugandans Flee Fearing for Their Lives

The BBC reports that gay men are fleeing Uganda following increased harassment as the parliament considers controversial anti-gay legislation. Uganda's Minister for Ethics and Integrity Simon Lokodo told reporters, "We have never hurt or isolated persons of this particular sexual orientation." A human rights group in Kenya has said dozens have crossed the border out of fear of persecution.

GLAAD COMMENDS ROLAND MARTIN

The Washington Post reports former CNN analyst Roland Martin, who was recently suspended over anti-gay comments he made during the Super Bowl on Twitter, has met with GLAAD. Martin told viewers of his *Washington Watch* program he met with GLAAD's Herndon Graddick to talk about his actions. "Over breakfast for over 90 minutes, Herndon shared his thoughts with regards to my tweets and why he deemed them offensive to the LGBT community, and I reiterated my apology that — that if anyone who construed my comment[s] as being antigay or homophobic, or advancing violence, that was not my intent, and for that I was truly sorry." GLAAD responded positively, commending Martin for his willingness to engage the organization.

LATINO GROUP SEEKS FEDERAL INVESTIGATION INTO

GAY ARIZONA SHERIFF

MSNBC reports that Latino rights organization Respecto sent a request in February to the US Dept of Justice for a probe into the alleged abuse of power by a recently outed gay Sheriff in Arizona. The sheriff, Pinal County's Paul Babeu, was outed by his Mexican migrant ex-lover after Babeu allegedly threatened to deport him. The letter, signed by the group's director, Lydia Guzman, said in part, "These types of threats and acts of intimidation send a horrible message to the migrant community that they cannot look to their law enforcement agencies for protection when they are victims of a crime."

UK GAY POLICE OFFICER WINS DISCRIMINATION CASE

The BBC reports that black gay police detective Kevin Maxwell has won his discrimination lawsuit against Scotland Yard. The 33-year old Metropolitan

Police officer, who serves on the force's counter terrorism command, argued successfully that he was exposed to racist and homophobic comments from other officers. The tribunal found he was "subjected to direct discrimination, harassment and victimization." Scotland Yard has said it has launched an internal investigation.

RAHM EMANUEL VOWS TO PUSH FOR LEGALIZING GAY MARRIAGE IN ILLINOIS

The *Chicago Sun-Times* reports that Chicago mayor Rahm Emanuel announced in February his support for legalizing gay marriage in Illinois, as well as extending benefits to the domestic partners of state employees. Currently, civil unions are legal in Illinois, but not marriage.

LIBERIA EX-FIRST LADY PROPOSES TOUGH ANTI-GAY BILL

AFP reports that Liberia's former first lady Jewel Taylor, now a

senator, has introduced legislation that would make homosexuality punishable by death. Sodomy is already a crime that can result in up to three years imprisonment. Another senator supporting the bill told reporters, it aims "to prevent the parliament from talking about such an issue that is against our tradition and culture."

UGANDA GAY WORKSHOP RAIDED BY ETHICS MINISTER

The BBC reports that Uganda's Minister for Ethics, Simon Lokodo, raided a gay rights workshop in Entebbe. Mr. Lokodo told reporters, "I have closed this conference because it's illegal. We do not accept homosexuality in Uganda. So go back home." Salil Shetty, Amnesty International's secretary general, said in a statement "This is an outrageous attempt to prevent lawful and peaceful activities of human rights defenders in Uganda."

LESBIAN COUPLE HIJACKS RADIO DIVORCE

Auckland Now reports that a New Zealand lesbian couple hijacked a local radio station's promotion that aimed to pay a couple's divorce expenses if they had the conversation on air. The women, disgusted by the radio stunt, entered the contest and, unbeknownst to the hosts, won. When Sam called her supposed husband "Andy" on air, her wife Amber, launched an angry tirade on air chastising the station for the stunt.

GAY COUPLE SETS WORLD RECORD FOR LONGEST KISS

VOA reports that a gay couple in Thailand celebrated Valentine's Day with a 50-hour, 25-minute and one second kiss, setting a new world's record. The couple beat out six other couples who took part in an annual *Ripley's Believe it or Not* longest kissing competition. The couple had to keep their lips touching, even while eating, drinking and going to the bathroom. They broke the previous record of 46 hours and 24 minutes. ■



Photo courtesy of Travis Hahler

Against The Amendment: Travis Hahler

TRAVIS HAhLER, a Minnesotan-in-training, is a graduate student at the University of South Dakota in Vermillion, SD. He's finishing his Master of Business Administration and is a new intern for Minnesotans United for All Families.

Lavender Magazine: You've lived in South Dakota your entire life, in fact you still live there, what are your ties to Minnesota? What motivated you to get involved to defeat this amendment?

Travis Hahler: Growing up in a small town, I was never exposed to the GLBT community. I knew I was "different" in high school but it wasn't until college that I was actually exposed to other gay people. Frankly, I had no idea what to think and instead of embracing being gay, I tried to be straight and joined a fraternity.

If I have to admit that I was completely wrong for once in my life that was it. I came out to my fraternity brothers three months into pledging and, to my surprise, everyone was supportive. I had more than 60 men from South Dakota, Minnesota, Iowa, and Nebraska who all grew up in small towns telling me that there is nothing wrong with being gay and that they had my back if I ever needed them.

None of that had gotten me thinking about gay marriage or GLBT rights until one of my fraternity brothers introduced me to Brian. Now my boyfriend of a year and a half, Brian changed the way I looked at marriage and GLBT rights because I fell head-over-

heels in love with him and realized that no matter how much I loved him, we couldn't get married in South Dakota or Minnesota. So, I knew I wanted to get involved in supporting marriage for same-sex couples.

LM: So, your current relationship motivated you to become involved in the campaign, but how did you come to Minnesotans United for All Families?

TH: Last summer, Brian was promoted to a position that required him to work from Minneapolis instead of Sioux Falls. We had both discussed the fact that we really enjoyed the Twin Cities and he moved to Minneapolis in June.

I got a call from Brian one night and he told me about the legislation that would ban marriage for us and many others. He said that MN United was asking for volunteers and that he was going to help out. Since I am still living in Sioux Falls while I finish my MBA I really wanted to get involved but wasn't sure how. Then I saw that they were looking for interns and I thought, "Bingo, that's my chance."

LM: Now you're an intern, but you still live in South Dakota?

TH: Yes! I call myself a Minnesotan-in-training because I spend every other weekend in Minneapolis. I am lucky enough to have a lot of office time and when I'm not in the office, I work from Sioux Falls.

LM: What do you enjoy the most

about being an intern?

TH: As an MBA student, my time is limited, but I love the opportunity to be able to utilize the skills that I have learned to help make the world a better place this first month as an intern. I know so many people who will be affected by this legislation and I'm happy to do my part to spread the message to vote no on the proposed amendment.

Not to mention, everyone at MN United is great. You meet moms, grandmothers, dads, husbands, wives, brothers, sisters, friends, and people just really excited about defeating this amendment. To me, that is the best part. Every time I go to the office I am reminded that there are so many people supporting me and fighting for the cause. It makes me excited and proud to one day be a Minnesotan myself.

LM: Do you have any advice that you would give people about getting involved?

TH: We need all the help we can get to increase awareness, promote marriage equality, and encourage people to vote no on the amendment, and if you are good at something or passionate about something, there is a place for you. I know I was a little concerned my first time volunteering to make phone calls, but it turned out to be so rewarding. No matter how much time you have to volunteer, we are happy to have you. This is your chance to help make Minnesota a better place and leave your mark on history. □



Self-Disclosure

THE NONPROFIT leadership retreat at a fancy conference center started out easy enough. The twenty of us stood and introduced ourselves. We drew pictures with our non-dominant hand. We shaped multi-colored pipe-cleaners into flowers.

Then things got dicey.

"Choose a partner and interview each other using the questionnaire on your table," the facilitator said assuredly.

I was the odd woman out and ended up with two men, both strangers. I looked at the questionnaire. The third question roared: "What was the biggest challenge you've faced in your life?" Other questions asked how I've changed over the years and what I valued in my life, all of which made me—a transgender not out to this group of straight married people—exceedingly uncomfortable.

My pulse raced. I thought, *Get out of here before you are forced to self-disclose.*

I went into the hall with the facilitator and explained that I was transgender and felt violated. "I don't know these people," I said. "And you're asking me to tell two *men* what was the biggest challenge in my life? I can't do that. Hell, I won't do that."

The facilitator was supportive and told me to disclose only what I felt comfortable with. "Please, don't leave," she urged.

I went back to the room and sat with the men. I refused to answer anything except about where I was born. "Newark, New Jersey," I said. "Don't hold it against me."

From there, we went to ice breakers and

Myers-Briggs personality-type exercises. I learned I'm an extrovert and a "feeler," as opposed to a "thinker." Slowly the group got to know each other. I started to feel good until someone reframed one of my comments. In a split second, I heard, "I agree with what *he* said." The person had never known me as a man.

My heart sank.

The next day, we tested our leadership and team building skills with a scavenger hunt. In the heat of the exercise with energy abuzz because of our frantic search for items, *another person* referred to me in the male pronoun.

Again, it hurt.

Over lunch, I talked about the Marriage Amendment and how we needed to defeat it.

A woman attorney, not accustomed to GLBT people, asked probingly why GLBT people should be allowed to marry. Minnesotans United for All Families trained me well and I had all the right answers. What I didn't expect were her last questions: "Can I ask if you were a man at one time? Do you now consider yourself a woman?"

The inquiries were well intended and innocent. Still, many transgenders—this one included—hate being reminded that they don't pass.

"Yes," I answered, reluctantly. "I used to be a boy, and now I'm a girl." I went on. "Actually, I've always been a girl. Only now, after a very long journey, have I been able to live as one."

The woman smiled genuinely. We went

back to our last retreat exercises.

By then, it had become obvious that I needed to say something about the elephant in the room. It helped that I had come to trust everyone—they were all good people, I could see now.

At the end, we went around the room summarizing what we'd learned in the day and a half seminar. When it was my turn, I explained that I had learned a great deal about leadership. I ended with, "For the one or two of you who haven't figured it out, I'm transgender. It's taken a long time to be myself. Feel free to ask me about it."

I looked around the room and saw smiling people. *Maybe these people won't judge me; maybe they will accept me anyway*, I thought.

People started in on the goodbyes. The lunch woman who wanted to know about GLBT issues grabbed me as I headed for the door. "You get a hug goodbye," she said. The embrace warmed me.

I took a couple more steps. Dennis, a sixty-something who rarely said anything, was leaving at the same time. He stopped and grinned. In one quick move, I heard, "Goodbye Ellie, see you at next month's meeting" and got a tight hug. It was a cosmic event, completely unexpected. Could he have ever known a transgender before me? I doubted it.

I drove away from the conference feeling numb, reminded yet again that I don't entirely pass as female.

Luckily, it doesn't seem to matter. ■



Preview: 39th Annual Twin Cities Auto Show

IS THIS the year to attend the Twin Cities Auto Show?

Considering last year's rebound of the automotive industry, there are plenty of reasons to attend. In the past few months, a slew of new products made their debuts by promoting the virtues of higher fuel economy, lesser emissions, more intelligent design and engineering. Others promised extraordinary performance never seen even during the days of the muscle car and the early exotics.

It is an exciting time to fall in love with the automobile. From what is being said online and off, we appear to be ready for it. It is, indeed, cause for celebration.

The point is that we, in the Twin Cities and throughout the Upper Midwest, love our automobiles. We are now ready to embrace this new era of the automobile.

Starting on March 10, the doors of the Minneapolis Convention Center will open for the 39th edition of the Twin Cities Auto Show. This year's show will not only feature the latest in automobiles from every brand sold in the state, it also offers other experiences to showcase the latest in "green" propulsion and fuel options, the most luxurious vehicles in our showrooms, and a chance to sample a new vehicle through the show's Ride & Drive experience. If you want just more than cars and trucks, veteran music group Blood, Sweat & Tears will perform right at the show on March 17.

For those of us who could not be bothered with large crowds, there are private tours available before the doors open every day at the Auto Show. You and up to 24 of your friends are given a guided tour of the auto show with a few other premiums, including preferred parking at the Convention Center and a gift bag for everyone in your party.

2013 DODGE DART R/T

There will be plenty of new vehicles to see on the floor of the Minneapolis Conven-



2013 Dodge Dart R/T. Photos by Randy Stern

tion Center this year. Amongst the newest models to appear, the 2013 Dodge Dart is scheduled to be on the show floor. The Dart is the first amongst a wave of new Chrysler products developed in concert with its Fiat partners. The result is a compact that will surprise you with an aggressive, but entertaining design, plenty of room inside and a suite of technological and performance options to make your Dart experience a very enjoyable one. If there were a potential "star" of the show, it would be the Dart.

Ford would be an important stop to make with two upcoming new models to check out—the 2013 Escape and 2013 Fusion. As seen on the Fiesta and Focus, Ford's Kinetic design language transformed two very popular prod-

ucts in the Ford lineup into very entertaining-looking vehicles. What is even more intriguing has been the absence of any V6-powered models or flex-fuel capability across both new lines. Instead, you get EcoBoost turbocharged engines—small in size, but packed with a lot of power. While the Escape will not have a hybrid for the 2013 model, Fusion gains a plug-in hybrid called the Energi to augment the regular hybrid model.

2013 CADILLAC ATS

If you head across to General Motors, you would be able to experience a few very intriguing upcoming models. Cadillac should be able to bring its new compact ATS



2013 Cadillac ATS.

and large XTS sedans for us to enjoy. The XTS replaces the DTS and STS as its large luxury sedan, while the ATS arrives to battle BMW's brand-new 3-Series sedan. Buick is scheduled to bring its compact crossover Encore to Minneapolis. The Encore presents a different proposition for couples that live in urban neighborhoods, such as Linden Hills or Summit Hill, where parking can be at a premium. The Encore offers a small footprint for a four-seat crossover with enough power to shuttle groceries or commute within a reasonable distance. Expect the recently introduced and revised 2013 GMC Acadia and the 2013 Chevrolet Malibu to join the GM section of the show.

Brands from Europe and Asia will also bring some excitement to the auto show. First among equals will be the twin sports cars that were spawned from a collaboration between Toyota and Subaru. Scion should be bringing their version—the FR-S—along with Subaru's BRZ. Both sports coupes are seen as a departure from their normal offerings. For Subaru, this is the first rear-wheel-drive vehicle since the 360 ended production in 1971, while the Scion offers the first horizontally opposed engine in Toyota's history. Also expected to be at the Auto Show from Toyota will be the Scion iQ, the 2013 Lexus GS and the entire Prius family—including the smallest member, the C.

Hyundai recently introduced a slew of new variants for the Veloster and Elantra, along with a revised Genesis coupe, all expected to



Toyota NS 4 Concept.

be at the Convention Center. BMW's new 3-Series should also be there, along with the new 2013 Mercedes-Benz SL-Class roadster, Range Rover Evoque, Acura ILX compact, the Infiniti JX three-row crossover, and the Mazda CX-5 compact crossover.

TOYOTA NS4 CONCEPT

Usually, we will find a concept car amongst the displays at the show. Toyota, Chrysler, Nissan, BMW, Chevrolet, Cadillac, and Acura rolled out some pretty evocative concepts at recent shows since last summer. Most of them are making their way through the auto show circuit. Don't be surprised if we see most—if not, all—of them at the Con-

vention Center.

If you are attending, advanced tickets are available for a discount at TCAutoShow.com. Otherwise, it is \$10.00 for adults at the door. On Wednesday March 14, you can attend the show for half the \$10.00 admission price. The website has all the information you need on specific hours and events during the show. If you attend anytime on March 10, you may actually run into the person who wrote this piece.

Will this be the year you go to the Auto Show? If it is your year, come join the celebration to ring in the era of the automobile.

Randy Stern is an automotive writer from Robbinsdale, Minnesota. He can also be followed at Victory & Reseda – <http://www.randystern.net>.

**Dear Ms. Behavior:**

A while ago I met a guy online and it seemed like he and I might have some things in common. When we talked on the phone he just didn't sound right (sane), but he lived far enough away, so that I felt safe talking to him without worrying about him wanting to get close to me. It turned out that he happened to know two unhappy lesbians in my area, so he started visiting. When I met him at the lesbians' apartment, the tent from the previous summer's trip was sprawled out in the living room. The apartment smelled like dog poop and urine. I shoveled my way through the living room to get to the sofa to sit down. I tried to smile and be polite, thinking "people live differently and I should accept it," which I didn't.

Anyway, my "date" turned out to be so needy he covered me like a dense slime and I couldn't breathe. I tried to be nice and tell him I didn't like him "that way," which didn't work. I e-mailed him and I told him I didn't want anything to do with him. I was then sent the "Fuck You" e-mail, followed by several more attempts at correspondence. I finally moved, changed my phone number and blocked his e-mail; I think I've finally gotten rid of him.

I wanted to share that story because I learned something valuable. I should have run to my car at the first scent of dog poop in the lesbians' apartment.

-STEVE

Dear Steve,

Actually, your first hint that things wouldn't go well was the fact that your prospective date did not sound sane on the phone. If you felt safe only because he lived far away, why did you have any further contact with him?

Ms. Behavior is alarmed by how many of her readers ignore obvious hints. They say things like, "I suspected he was psycho, unethical, and had bad hygiene on our first date. When we broke up six months later, I knew it was true because he broke into my apartment, stole all my money, and left his smelly clothing on my bed." Hello? What happened to that first hint, 180 days earlier?

But Ms. Behavior does not actually understand why you took issue with the lesbian tent and the dog's bodily fluids. In cool weather, plenty of lesbians secretly camp in their living rooms, and convince their dogs that they are in the great outdoors.

Dear Ms. Behavior:

Betty and I are getting hitched. She's out to her family, but not her grandmother, whom Betty loves. The family has Betty convinced that Nana will keel over at the very words "lesbian wedding." The problem is that Betty wants Nana to know, but is afraid to risk the consequences. Also, Nana gives all her beloved grandchildren \$10,000 on their wedding day. How can I convince Betty that she is just as entitled to the ten grand

as her married brother and now-divorced sister? Shouldn't Nana be given the choice? Betty always says that Nana loves her best, anyway. Won't Nana love her just as much, knowing she's a lesbian? I personally never think it's a mistake to come out, but then again, I don't want Betty to start our happy life together with any regrets. Can you advise us?

-BETTY'S BETROTHED**Dear Betty's Betrothed:**

"Don't tell Nana or she'll die," is effective emotional blackmail. But if old people really dropped dead every time they received "shocking" information, few people would have grey hair and we wouldn't have to worry about the state of Medicare.

If Betty doesn't tell her grandmother about you or the wedding, she obviously won't be able to invite her. That seems sad. And how close can Betty and her grandmother really be, if Betty has to hide her most meaningful relationship from Nana? The sacrifice of intimacy with someone so close seems like an even bigger loss than the potential \$10,000 dowry.

Coming out can be messy or volatile, but it's never a mistake (unless there's risk of bodily harm). Betty should risk the murder rap and introduce her beloved (you) to the old lady. Once Nana survives the initial news, Betty should invite her to come dance at your wedding. □

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DATELAND | Jennifer Parello

The Stupidest Day of the Year

I'VE NEVER had a good Valentine's Day. I might forgive Valentine's Day its many disappointments if, in fact, I had a few monumentally disastrous Valentine's Day stories to dine out on. But every Valentine's Day has ranged from mediocre to just plain blah. The only memorable one took place when I was in my 20s. I got so drunk on margaritas that, for the following decade, every time I heard word "tequila" it caused me to have dry heaves.

So, last Valentine's Day when my girlfriend, who is romantically inclined and tends to take these types of celebrations seriously, proposed a big night out, I was less than enthused.

"Oh, let's just stay home and order a pizza," I said. And I don't even like pizza.

But she gave me that look that tells me that she's deeply disappointed in me and is considering leaving me for someone who likes industrial dance music, so I reluctantly gave in.

"Don't worry," she trilled. "I'll plan everything. You won't have to worry about a thing."

This, of course, only made me worry. I am the planner in our relationship. I book our flights, find our hotels, and keep our social calendar. I do this because a.) I'm a control freak and b.) she couldn't plan her way out of a paper bag. I mean that literally. Once I stuck a paper bag over her head to keep her from working at her computer on a Saturday morning, and she left it on and continued typing.

I made the mistake of letting my hopes for the evening soar when she announced that we would be going to one of my favorite restaurants for a steak dinner. This restaurant has a jazz quartet with a singer who performs to an enthusiastic senior citizen crowd. And since I've been a senior-citizen-in-training since my teens, I was delighted! Red meat, a relish tray, and a Frank Sinatra knock-off. Heaven!

Valentine's Day hopes started their predi-

cable slide the moment we stepped into the restaurant. Instead of being taken to the main dining room—with the jazz band—we were led upstairs to what appeared to be an unfinished attic with blaring fog lights. We were told that the room was only open on "special days" for "special people."

We took one look around the room and immediately discovered that "special people" meant "freaks and losers." The tables were filled with single moms and their kids, single women holding dateless Valentine's Day support groups, people with missing limbs, and "non-traditional" couples, such as us. I actually burst out laughing because it was so ridiculously obvious. But my girlfriend seethed with anger and insisted we leave.

I argued against it, saying that it would be impossible to get into another restaurant on this stupidest of all nights, and, plus, I was really looking forward to that steak. But she was deeply insulted and was already starting to mouth off to the wait staff. So we left, with her telling anyone who would listen that we'd never return. They collectively shrugged with indifference.

I don't have enough column inches to describe the long, tearful and desperate search for food that followed. Suffice it to say, we wound up at home several hours later with a pizza.

This year, as the calendar marched toward February 14, I asked if she'd like me to take over the Valentine's Day planning duties. She looked stricken, as if I had just belted her in the puss.

"Absolutely not! I've got it under control," she exclaimed. "We're going to have the best Valentine's Day ever!"

I immediately made a mental note to put a couple steaks in the freezer and to have a tissue box at the ready for the inevitable flood of tears. □

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TOP FIVE FAVORITE LISTENER MOMENTS



1. The Disturbing Sound of Hash

An all-time favorite listener moment occurred one sunny summer day whilst Wanda was in her kitchen making lunch. The sound of opening and emptying a can of corned beef hash so grossed out listeners that they continue to remember it vividly some six years later.

Photo by Flickr user joyosity.



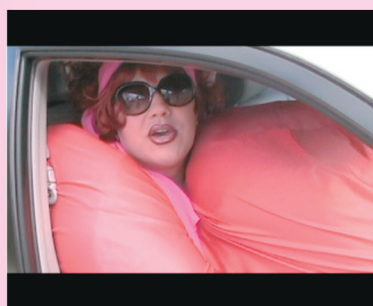
2. Mini Radio Drama “The Purple Buffalo”

Wanda and her gal pal Adam Carmichael created a multi-part audio podcast miniseries called “The Purple Buffalo”. The fantastical farce hearkened back to the golden age of radio theater and followed the lives of a WWII-weary British couple and their visits to the local pub.



3. Madge & Wanda Bake A Cake

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4. Michele Bachmann Video

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WHORACLE

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- ▶ MADONNA SAVES THE GAYS ▶ PENNEYS FROM ELLEN ▶ WHITNEY HOUSTON CREMATED?
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The first time I craved your approval was in elementary school. You told me how important it was to learn the Pledge of Allegiance. So I did. The same year, you fussed at me because I preferred playing House to playing catch. So I left my girlfriends behind and tried to "keep my eye on the ball" and "stop being afraid of the ball." It hit me only a few times before I got the hang of it. The misery of it. I ran away with the girls when you weren't looking.

Then I hit puberty and pretended I had girlfriends because that's what you wanted me to do. Because I looked in your eyes and saw the despair—the shadowy truth you refused to see, but secretly knew was there.

You delighted when I brought girls home. I suffered. I suffered in the car with my girlfriend after football games, wanting desperately to get the goodnight kiss over with and run inside. To hide under my covers and think of boys, then cry because I felt it wasn't right, then dream of you coming after me. To scream your disapproval in my ear.

I did in school everything else a family would wish for. I was a straight-A student,

member of every school club, and leader in most. I even hosted the Miss South View High School beauty pageant—a role a million boys wanted, because the girls pursued the emcee's favor.

I was popular, again to your approval, mainly with girls. A "ladies man" you raved about me to your friends (an observation in increasing denial and desperation).

I keep thinking of what it was like then—while you were pursuing what you thought was right and good for the world, and I—I lay in bed, lying to myself. I told myself "I'm bisexual, I just like boys more than girls."

"One day," I reasoned, "I will choose a girl. I'll settle down and have a family. Just like he wants me to. Just like everyone fucking wants me to."

College changed things, of course. I felt liberated; I accepted I was gay and focused on my studies. But not when you were in my face. That anxiety never went away. I pretended to you, even then, that I was still the ladies' man. And I was. Just the ladies' friend, man.

Until you found my MySpace, and saw the shirtless boys and their comments. You called me in half-relief—relieved that you didn't have to lie for the two of us anymore. But you were undoubtedly disappointed. Angry, even. You said you never wanted to hear about that side of my life.

You said you would never ask about my personal life again. And I, of course, wouldn't tell...

Look, I know I'm not the man you wanted me to be. I didn't grow up and get married and have kids like you did.

But I'm trying to.

You know, you did teach me something. You taught me the thing that makes me write this to you today. You taught me how to fight. You taught me to stand up for myself. To fight back when I'm knocked down.

And can't you see that's what we're doing? We're standing up to the bullies. We're saying that we're done hiding like you forced me to.

Whether you believe it or not, dad, we're fighting for our country. We're calling out the moral hypocrites—the amendments and laws of the world that prohibit us from the rights you enjoy; they amend nothing but our trust—and reveal just how hypocritical the bullies really are. We're fighting for the same reason you did—to protect the liberties we were ALL guaranteed.

And by the way, if you still think I'm a "pussy," try walking down the street holding another man's hand.

That's courage.

Your Son,

Justin □

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